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ON DIVINE LOVE

AND

THE MEANS OF ACQUIRING IT;

ALSO,

SURE MARKS

BY WHICH TO DISCOVER WHETHER OR N
THE LOVE OF GOD REIGNS IN US;

AND

ASPIRATIONS OF LOVE FOR JESUS CHRIST.

TRANSLATED FROM THE ITALIAN OF

SAINT ALPHONSUS M. LIGUORI.

BISHOP OF AGATHA, AND FOUNDER OF
THE CONGREGATION OF THE MOST HOLY REDEEMER.

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ON DIVINE LOVE,

AND

THE MEANS OF ACQUIRING IT.

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1. Our good God loves us with a great love, and, because he so loves us, he has a great desire that we should love him. Hence he not only calls on us to love him by repeated invitations in the holy scriptures, and by numberless benefits, general and particular, but would even oblige us to love him by an express precept, threatening hell to those who love him not, and promising heaven to those who love him. He desires that all should be saved, and that none should be lost as is most clearly shown by St. Peter and St. Paul; for, say they, *The Lord:.....dealeth patiently for your sake, not willing that any should perish, but that all should return to penance.* 2 St. Peter iii. 9. *Who will have all men to be saved.* 1 Tim. ii. 4. But if God desires that all should be saved, why did he create hell? He created hell, not that we might be damned, but that we might be induced by the fear of it to love him. If he had not created hell, who

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would have loved him? If, notwithstanding the existence of hell, the greater part of men choose rather to be consigned to its torments than to love God; had there been no hell, I ask again, who would have loved him? He therefore threatens with eternal torments those who do not love him, in order that as they will not voluntarily love him, they may at least, being constrained by the fear of hell, be as it were forced to love him.

2. O God! how fortunate and how honored would that man esteem himself to whom his king would say, "Love me, because I love you." A prince would be very careful not to debase himself so much as to act thus towards one of his vassals; but God, who is infinite goodness, the Lord of all, omnipotent, all-wise, who is most worthy of infinite love, who has enriched us with his spiritual and temporal blessings, disdains not to solicit our love, to exhort and command us to love him, and yet cannot prevail upon us to give him our hearts. What does he require of each of us but to love him? *What doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but that thou fear the Lord thy God.....and love him?* Deut. x. 12 The Son of God came into the world, and dwelt amongst us, as he himself declares, that we might love God: *I came to cast fire on the earth; and what will I but that it be kindled?* St. Luke xii. 49. We may observe with St. Thomas, on these words, *and what will I but that it be kindled?* "it would seem

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as though God, who possesses in himself infinite felicity, could not be happy without our loving him."

3. We cannot, therefore, doubt whether God loves us, and that with the greatest love; or whether so loving us, he desires that we should love him with our whole hearts. To each one of us he says, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart.* Deut. vi. 5. And he adds: *These words shall be in thy heart... ..and thou shalt meditate upon them sitting in thy house, and walking on thy journey, sleeping and rising. And thou shalt bind them as a sign on thy hand, and they shall be and shall move between thy eyes. And thou shalt write them in the entry, and on the doors of thy house.* Deut. vi. 6—9. In these words is evinced how earnestly and ardently God desires that we should each of us love him. He desires that the injunction to love him with our whole hearts should be imprinted in our hearts; and, that we may never forget it, he desires that we should meditate on it in our houses, on our journeys, when we retire to rest and when we awake from sleep. He desires that we should bind it as a remembrance on our hands, in order that, wherever we may be, it may present itself before our eyes; and hence the Pharisees, taking his words literally, carried it written on parchment in their right hands, and bound it on their foreheads.

4. St. Gregory of Nyssa writes, "Blessed art, which carries with it into the heart,

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God who casts it." By which the holy Father would say, that when God pierces the heart with a dart of love, that is, enables it by some special illumination to know his goodness and his love, and the desire which he has to be loved in return, he himself enters the heart with love's dart, being himself love, and he who casts its darts: *For*, as St. John writes, *God is charity.* 1 Ep. iv. 8. And as the dart remains fixed in the heart which it strikes, so God continues ever united with the soul which he penetrates with his love. O, let us ever be convinced, that God alone really loves us. The love of parents, of friends, and of all others who say that they love us, except those who love us purely for God, is not real, but interested love, as it is from self-love that they love us. Yes, my God, I well know that thou alone lovest me, and desirest my welfare, not for thine own interest, but solely through thy bounty and the love which thou bearest me; and I have been so ungrateful as not to commit so many offences and injuries against any one, as I have committed against thee, who hast so much loved me. O Jesus, suffer me not to be thus any more ungrateful to thee. Thou hast truly loved me, and therefore do I desire truly to love thee for the remainder of my life. I will say to thee with St. Catherine of Genoa, "O love, never more, will I commit sin, never more will I commit sin," thee only will I love, and no other.

5. St. Bernard says that the soul that

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really loves God, "cannot will any thing but what God wills." Let us then beseech our Lord to pierce us with his holy love; since the soul that is thus affected knows not how to will, and cannot will any thing but what God wills, and is entirely divested of all the desires of self-love. The being divested of self, along with the giving of herself entirely to God, is the dart with which our Lord declares himself to be stricken by the soul, when he saith to the holy spouse, *Thou hast wounded my heart, my sister, my spouse.* Cant. iv. 9.

6. How beautiful is the expression of the same St. Bernard, "*Discamus jaculari corda in Deum;*" "Let us learn to cast our hearts into God." When the soul gives herself without reserve to God, she casts her heart like a dart into the heart of God, who then declares himself, as it were, taken and made prisoner by the soul that thus gives him herself. This is the exercise of those souls that are wholly given to God; in the prayers which they address to him, "they cast their hearts into God," they give themselves wholly to him, again and again, by repeating the following or similar ejaculations of love:

My God and my all: besides thee what do I desire!

To thee, O Lord, do I give my whole self; and if I know not how to give my whole self to thee as I ought, do thou of thyself take full possession of me.

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Whom do I desire to love but thee, O Jesus, who hast died for me?

Draw me after thee: draw me out, O my Saviour, from the filth of my sins, draw me nigh to thee.

Bind me fast, O Lord, with the chains of thy love, that I may never more be separated from thee.

I desire to be wholly thine. Hear me, O Lord, I desire to be wholly, wholly thine do thou make me all thine own.

Whom do I desire but thee, my love, my all?

Since thou hast called me to thy love, give me strength to please thee in all things as thou desirest.

Whom do I desire to love but thee, who art infinite goodness, and worthy of infinite love?

Thou hast inspired me with the desire of becoming wholly thine, complete what thou hast begun in me.

What do I desire in this world besides thee, who art my sovereign good?

I give myself without reserve to thee, do thou accept me, and enable me to continue faithful to thee until death.

I desire to love thee during life, that I may love thee for all eternity.

Jesus, my joy, my bliss so great,
That I can love but thee:
Myself to thee I consecrate,
Do what thou wilt with me.

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7. Happy indeed is that soul that can truly say, *My beloved to me, and I to him.*—Cant. ii. 16. My God has given himself entirely to me, and I have given myself entirely to him; I am no longer my own, but belong entirely to my God. He who can say this with his whole heart, says St. Bernard, would willingly endure the pains of hell, (if they could be endured without the loss of God,) rather than for one moment be separated from him. O how rich a treasure is the treasure of divine love! Happy is he who possesses it! Let him take every care and do all in his power to preserve and increase it; and let him who does not as yet possess it, adopt the necessary means to acquire it.

8. The first means is to divest ourselves of all earthly affections. In a heart filled with such affections, there is no room for the love of God; the more it gives itself to the earth, the less will it be influenced by divine love. If then we desire that our hearts should be filled with divine love, we must be careful to cast out earthly things entirely from them. If we would become saints, we must imitate St. Paul, who to gain the love of Jesus Christ, despised all things else as dirt *I count all things.....but as dung, that may gain Christ.* Phil. iii. 8. O, let us beseech the Holy Spirit to inflame us with his holy love, for then we shall despise and fear as vanity, smoke, and dirt, all the riches,

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pleasures, honours, and dignities of the earth, for which the greater part of men miserably forfeit their salvation.

9. The heart into which divine love enters, no longer makes any acount of all that the world esteems: *If a man should give all the substance of his house for love, he shall despise it as nothing.* Cant. viii. 7. St. Francis of Sales says, that when the house is on fire, all the goods are thrown out through the window; by which he means, that when the heart is inflamed with divine love, man, without sermons or exhortations from his spiritual director, of himself seeks to divest himself of all worldly goods, honors, riches, and all other earthly things, that he may love nothing but God. St. Catherine of Genoa said, that she did not love God on account of his gifts; but loved his gifts in order to love him the more.

10. Gilibert writes, that, to a heart that loves God, it is a hard and insufferable thing to divide its love between God and the things of the world; to love, at the same time, God and creatures: "Oh, how hard for him that loves, to divide his soul between Christ and the world!" St. Bernard says, that divine love is insolent; and by insolent, he means, that it will not suffer any thing to divide it with God, since God must have all for himself. Does then God require too much in demanding of the soul her entire love? "Sovereign holiness," observes St.

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Bonaventure, "ought to be loved exclusively of all things else." Infinite loveliness, and infinite bounty, deserving of infinite love, such as is God, justly require that he alone should be loved by the heart which he has himself created to love him, and for which, that it might love him alone, he has, as St Bernard expressed it, *expended* himself. So that each one of us, when thinking of Jesus Christ, may truly, and ought indeed to say with St. Bernard, "For my sake thou hast completely expended thyself;" seeing that for each one of us he has sacrificed his whole life, and shed his most sacred blood, and died of torments on a cross, and, that besides dying for us, he has left us his body, his soul, and his whole self, in the sacrament of the altar, to be the food and nourishment of our souls, that so each one of us may be entirely united with him.

11. Happy the soul, writes St. Gregory, which arrives at such a state, that all things become for it insupportable which are not God, whom alone it loves. Hence, we should be carefully on our guard against placing our affections on creatures, lest they should rob us of part of that love which God claims entirely for himself. And although these affections may be good in themselves, such as we have for our parents and friends, still we must attend to what St. Philip Neri says, that as much of our love as we give to creatures, so much we take from God.

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12. We should therefore, render ourselves gardens closed up, as the sacred spouse is called by our Lord in the Canticles: *My sister, my spouse, is a garden enclosed.* iv. 12. The soul that closes the door of her heart to all earthly affections is called a garden enclosed. When, then, any creature would enter and take possession of a share in our affections, we should refuse it admittance, and turn ourselves to Jesus Christ and say, "O Jesus, thou alone art my all, and I desire to love no other but thee. Thou art the God of my heart, and my portion for ever. My God, thou alone shall be the Lord of my heart, thou alone my love" Thus let us never cease to call upon God to bestow on us the grace of his pure love; for, as St. Francis of Sales writes, "The pure love of God consumes every thing which is not God, and converts every thing into itself."

13. The second means of acquiring divine love is to meditate on the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. On this point, dear reader, you would do well to read the book which I lately published, entitled "Reflections on the Passion of Jesus Christ," in which are displayed at length the sufferings which our Saviour endured for us. It is certain, that one cause why Jesus Christ is so little loved in the world, is the negligence and ingratitude of Christians in not reflecting, at least occasionally, on how much Jesus Christ has suffered, and on the love with

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which he has suffered for them. "It hath seemed folly," says St. Gregory, "that God should die for us," yet it is of faith that he has done so: *Christ.....hath loved us, and hath delivered himself for us;* Eph. v. 2; and hath been pleased to shed his blood to wash away our sins: *He hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.*— Apoc. i. 5.

14. "Thou hast so loved me, O my God," says St. Bonaventure, "that thou seemest to have hated thyself." And he has been pleased that we should even feed on him in the holy Communion. Speaking of this most holy Sacrament, St. Thomas devoutly complains, that God has humbled himself towards us as though he were our servant and each one of us his God.

15. Hence the Apostle takes occasion to say, *The charity of God presseth us;* 2 Cor. v. 14; that is, obliges, and, as it were, forces us to love him. O God, what do not men do for the love of some creature on which they have fixed their affections? And is a God of infinite bounty, of infinite beauty, and who has even died upon a cross for each one of us, so very little loved? O let us imitate the Apostle, who said, *God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.* Gal. vi. 14. What greater glory, said this great Apostle, can I hope for in this world, than to have had a God to shed his blood and to die for the love of me? And this should every one say who

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has faith; and if he has faith, how can he love any thing but God? O God, how can it be possible that any soul contemplating Jesus crucified, fastened with three nails, hanging from the wounds of his hands and feet, and dying of pure grief and agony for the love of us, should not feel itself irresistibly drawn and constrained to love him with all its powers?

16. The third means of arriving at the perfection of divine love, is to conform ourselves in all things to the holy will of God. St. Bernard says, that he whose love is perfect, cannot will any thing but what God wills. Many say, indeed, that they are quite resigned to whatever God pleases, but when any adversity, or troublesome infirmity happens to them, they can no longer preserve themselves in peace and tranquillity. But it is not so with those who are really conformed to the divine will; they say. "Thus it pleases, or, thus it hath pleased him whom I love," and are immediately composed and tranquil. "All things," says St. Bonaventure, "are sweet to holy love." Such souls as these know that whatever happens in the world is either commanded or permitted by Almighty God; and hence, whatever befalls them, they humble themselves, and live contentedly under the appointments of heaven. And although God does not will that others should persecute and injure us, yet for wise and just purposes, he wills that we should patiently suffer such

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persecution and injury, however painful they may be to us.

17. St. Catherine of Genoa said: "If God had placed me in the depths of hell, I would have said: *It is good for us to be here.* I would have said, I am content to be here by the will of him whom I love, who loves me more than all others, and knows what is best for me." Really to rest is to rest in the hands of the divine will.

18. St. Teresa says: "All that should be sought for in the exercise of prayer, is conformity of our will with the divine will, in which consists the highest perfection." Hence we should frequently repeat that prayer of holy David: *Teach me to do thy will.* Ps. cxiii. 9. Lord, as thou desirest my salvation, teach me ever to do thy will. The most perfect act of love, of which the soul is capable, is that which St. Paul made when he was converted, and said: *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* Acts, ix. 6. Make known to me, O Lord, what thou requirest of me, and I will accomplish it. Such an act is of more value than numberless fasts and disciplines. The accomplishment of the divine will ought to be the object of all our actions, desires, and prayers. For this, we should frequently beg the prayers of the Blessed Virgin, our patron Saints, and our Angel Guardians, that we may obtain the grace of doing in all things the will of God. And when any thing happens to us contrary to our own self-love, we should make an act

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of resignation; by so doing we should gain treasures of merit: let us therefore accustom ourselves to repeat, on such occasions, those words which Jesus himself has taught us by his own example: *The chalice which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?* John xviii. 11. *Yea, Father, for so it hath seemed good in thy sight.* St. Luke x. 21. O Lord, as it hath pleased thee, so doth it also please me; or let us say with holy Job: *As it hath pleased the Lord, so it is done, blessed be the name of the Lord.* Father John of Avila says: "One act of thanksgiving, when things go wrong with us, is worth a thousand thanks when things are agreeable to our inclinations." And here I must repeat, that really to rest is to rest in the hands of the divine will; for then is verified that declaration of the Holy Ghost: *Whatsoever shall befall the just man, shall not make him sad.* Prov. xii. 21.

19. The fourth means of acquiring divine love, is meditation. Eternal truths cannot be discerned by the eyes of the body, like material things, but can only be discerned by thought and consideration; hence if we do not occasionally reflect on the truths of eternity, and particularly on the obligation of loving God as he deserves, for all the benefits which he has bestowed upon us, and for all the love which he has shown us, we shall find it difficult to detach our affections from creatures, and to give our whole love to God. It is in meditation that God makes

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known the nothingness of all earthly things and the value of such as are heavenly; and it is in meditation that he inflames with his love, the souls that do not resist his calls.

20. Many complain that when they meditate they do not find God. They do not find him because they seek him with hearts full of the earth. "Detach the heart from creatures," says St. Teresa, "and then, when you seek God, you will find him." *The Lord is good*, saith the Prophet Jeremias,.....*to the soul that seeketh him.* Lam. iii. 25. In order therefore to find God in meditation, the soul must divest herself of all affection to earthly things, and then God will speak to her: *I will lead her into solitude and I will speak to her heart.* Osee ii. 14. But to find God, as St. Gregory observes, not only the solitude of the body but the solitude of the heart is necessary. Our Lord one day said to St. Teresa: 'I would willingly speak to many souls, but the world makes so much noise in their hearts, that my voice could not be heard." When the soul is really detached from all things but God, and presents herself in meditation before him, he then indeed speaks to her, and makes known to her the greatness of his love for her; and the soul, says a pious author, burning with holy love, speaks not; but, in her silence, how much does she say! "The silence of love," writes this author, "says more to God than all human eloquence: every sigh discloses her

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whole interior." Then she cannot often enough repeat: *My beloved to me, and I to him.*

21. The fifth means of acquiring an eminent degree of divine love is prayer. We are poor and possessed of nothing, but by prayer we may become rich in all things; for God has promised to hear every one that prays to him. He says: *Ask, and it shall be given to you.* St. Matt. vii. 7. What more can a man say to his friend, than ask of me what you will, and I will give it you? This is what our Lord says to each of us. God, and the Lord of all, promises to give us what we ask for; if then we are poor, the fault is our own, because we ask not for the graces which we stand in need of. And hence meditation is morally necessary for all; because, without meditation, when we are engaged in worldly affairs, we think but little of the soul; but when we give ourselves to meditation, we discover the wants of our souls, ask for graces, and obtain them.

22. The Saints spent their whole lives in meditation and prayer; and all the graces, by which they became Saints, they obtained through prayer. If then we desire to become Saints and to be saved, we must ever stand and pray at the gates of the divine mercy, and ask for all we want as for an alms. Is humility necessary for us? let us ask for it and we shall become humble. Is patience necessary for us in the time of

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tribulation? let us ask for it and we shall become patient. Do we desire divine love? let us ask for it and we shall obtain it. *Ask, and it shall be given to you*, is the promise of God, which cannot fail And Jesus Christ, in order to give us greater confidence in prayer, has promised us, that, whatever graces we ask of the Father, in his name, or for the love of him, or on account of his infinite merits, the Father will grant them to us: *Amen, amen, I say to you: if you ask the Father any thing in my name he will give it you.* St. John xvi. 23. And in another place he says, that whatever we seek from him, in his name and through his merits, he will accomplish for us: *If you shall ask any thing in my name, that I will do.* St. John xiv. 14. Yes, for it is of faith that whatever God is able to do, Jesus Christ is able to do, because he is the Son of God.

23. However cold the soul may be in divine love, if it have faith, I know not how it can fail to be urged to love Jesus Christ, by even cursorily considering what the sacred Scriptures say of the love which Jesus Christ has shown us in his passion, and in the most holy Sacrament of the altar. Of his passion, Isaias says: *Surely he hath borne our infirmities, and carried our sorrows*, liii. 4; and in the following verse: *But he was wounded for our iniquities, he was bruised for our sins.* So that it is of faith that Jesus Christ was pleased to suffer pains and sorrows, in order to deliver us from the punishments

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which were due to us. And why did he do this, but for the love which he bore us? *Christ loved us*, saith St. Paul, *and delivered himself for us.* Eph. v. 2. And St. John says: *He hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.* Apoc. i. 5. Of the Sacrament of the Blessed Eucharist, Jesus himself, when he instituted it, said to us all: *Take ye, and eat: this is my body.* 1 Cor. xi. 24. And in another place: *He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, abideth in me, and I in him.* St. John vi. 57. He who believes, how can he read these things and not be forced in some measure to love our Redeemer, who, besides shedding his blood and sacrificing his life for the love of us, has also left us his sacred body and blood in the sacrament of the altar, to be the food of our souls, and to be wholly united with us in the holy Communion.

24. One more short reflection on the passion of Jesus Christ He shows himself to us, nailed to a cross, covered with blood, and agonizing in the sorrows of death. I ask, why has Jesus shown himself to us in so pitiable a state? Was it for the sole purpose of exciting our compassion? No, it was not so much to excite our compassion, as to gain our love. To know that he has loved us from all eternity, ought to have been more than sufficient to make us love him: *I have loved thee with an everlasting love.* Jer. xxxi. 3. But our Lord seeing

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But this was not sufficient to overcome our tepidity, in order to induce us to love him as he desired to be loved, was pleased practically to demonstrate his love for us, by dying for the love of us, covered with wounds upon a cross, to teach us by his sufferings the immense and tender love which he bore us. This is well expressed by St. Paul, when he says: *He hath loved us, and hath delivered himself for us.* Eph. v. 2.

Prayer of St. Bonaventure to Jesus Christ, to obtain his holy love.

Most sweet Jesus, pierce the interior of my soul with the sweet wound of thy love, that my soul may ever languish and be dissolved with thy love, and with the desire of possessing thee: and long to quit this life, that it may come to be perfectly united with thee in a blessed eternity. Grant that my soul may ever thirst after thee, speak only to thee, find thee, and do all for thy glory. Grant that my heart may be ever fixed on thee, who art my only hope, my riches, my peace, my refuge, my confidence, my treasure, and my inheritance

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Prayer to the ever Blessed Virgin, to obtain the love of Jesus and a happy death.

O MARY, thou who so much desirest to see Jesus loved, if thou lovest me, this is the favour which I now ask of thee, to obtain for me a great love for Jesus Christ. Thou obtainest from thy Son whatever thou pleasest. pray then for me, and console me. Obtain for me a great love for thee, who of all creatures art the most loving and beloved of God. And through that grief which thou sufferedst on Calvary, when thou didst behold Jesus expire on the cross, obtain for me a happy death, that by loving Jesus and thee, my Mother, I may come to love you for ever in heaven.

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SURE MARKS

BY WHICH TO DISCOVER WHETHER OR NO THE LOVE OF GOD REIGNS IN US.

DIVINE love in the sacred Scriptures is compared to fire.

Our Lord, to declare to us in the Gospel, St. Luke xii. 49, that he came upon the earth to bring divine love, expresses himself by saying, that he came upon the earth to bring fire: *I am come to cast fire upon the earth.* And God himself, in the Apocalypse iii. 13, persuades the soul to provide herself with burning gold: *I counsel thee to buy.....gold fire-tried*, that is, divine love.

Now fire has two properties: it resists what is contrary to it, that is, blasts and breezes; so that instead of being extinguished it is increased by them; and it is also active: fire always tends to action. Here then are two sure marks by which to discover whether or no the love of God reigns in us; labour and patience

Do we always labour for God by a pure intention of doing his divine will, and of pleasing him in all things? Do we for his sake willingly suffer every kind of adversity, poverty, tribulations, infirmities, and the like? Instead of being removed from him,

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are we brought nearer to him by such things? If so, we have within us the holy love of God: our love is fire which evinces itself in action, and resists what is contrary to it: if not, our love for God is not true but false love; the love of the tongue, but not of the heart; against which St. John admonishes us in his first epistle, iii. 18: *My little children*, (words full of charity,) *my little children, let us not love in word, nor in tongue, but in deed, and in truth.*

"If it is not active," says St. Gregory, "it is not love." And Jesus Christ says: *He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them: he it is that loveth me.* St. John xiv. 21. St. Augustin says: "Love renders all bitter and cruel things quite easy, and almost nothing." So that, if we act always for the sake of God, if we keep the divine commandments, (and with the divine commandments, those of his holy Church, and the obligations and duties of our states of life,) if we generously and cheerfully surmount, for God's sake, everything contrary to our inclinations, even what is most displeasing to us, we have within us the holy love of God. Our love is fire, which evinces itself in action, and resists what is contrary to it. If not, our love for God is not true but false love, the love of the tongue, but not of the heart. *My little children, let us not love in word, nor in tongue, but in deed, and in truth.*

But to some more practical proof You

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have an opportunity of honestly gaining a great profit; an occasion offers of some lawful gratification; the duties of your state of life are painful to you; the fatigues of your employment weary you; but for God's sake, you care not for such profit, you renounce such gratification, you fulfil all your duties, and go through all your labours? If so, you have the holy love of God: your love is fire which evinces itself in action: if not, your love for God is not true but false love, the love of the tongue, but not of the heart. *My little children, let us not love in word, nor in tongue, but in deed, and in truth.*

Again: an unexpected tribulation comes upon you; a litigation arises, on which your all depends: one in whom all your hopes are placed, and who is your only support, suddenly dies; do you, on such occasions, offer all to our Lord, and bear all with cheerfulness? If so, you have the holy love of God: your love is fire, which resists what is contrary to it: if not, your love for God is not true but false love, the love of the tongue and not of the heart. *My little children, let us not love in word, nor in tongue, but in deed, and in truth.*

O how much surer a mark of love is suffering than action! since in action, it is pleasant in him who loves, to employ himself in favour of the object loved, and this is a sign that he loves; but he who suffers, entirely renounces self in favour of the object whom

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he loves, and this, therefore, is a sign that he loves the more.

By this, the Almighty chose in a singular manner to prove the great love of his servant Job. This holy man was certainly a great lover of God: but when did he show himself truly to be so? When he saw himself sorrounded by a numerous family? When he enjoyed himself in the abundance of all good things? When he was in perfect health? Yes, even then: since he acknowledged all as coming from God, rendered him thanks for all, offered sacrifices, attended to his duties, gave holy counsel to his children, and prayed continually for them: *Lest perhaps*, said he, *my sons have sinned.* Job i. 5. But he showed how truly great his love for God was, when God, in order to put his love to the test, stripped him at once of all his goods, deprived him by death of all his children, afflicted him with disease, and so covered him with leprosy, that he *took a potsherd, and scraped the corrupt matter, sitting on a dunghill:* in all these terrible calamities, in all these unheard-of afflictions, he only repeated, with invincible and ever more than memorable patience: *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: as it hath pleased the Lord, so it is done: blessed be the name of the Lord.* i. 21.

But who is holy Job? Jesus Christ himself when he was about to suffer the torments of his passion, said to his apostles: *That the*

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world may know that I love the Father..... Arise, let us go hence. St. John xiv. 31 This, this is the most certain, and incontestible mark of the true love of God: patience, patience; the suffering willingly of everything for God's sake.

The sayings and practices of the Saints on this head are very memorable.

St. Teresa: "Either to suffer or to die." St Mary Magdalen of Pazzi: "To suffer and not to die." St. John of the Cross: "To suffer and to be silent."

The holy martyrs defied the executioners to torment them, and provoked the wild beasts to devour them.

St. Liduina willingly suffered a painful infirmity for thirty-three years.

St. Frances of Rome voluntarily suffered the unjust exile of her husband and the confiscation of all their goods; and St. John of the Cross voluntarily endured a severe imprisonment of nine months, with a thousand other inconveniencies and sufferings.

This, this is the most certain and incontestible mark of the true love of God: patience, patience; the suffering willingly of everything for God's sake.

Happy and blessed is he who by these two sure marks, labour and patience, the doing and suffering all for God, is enabled to recognise within him the true love of God!

All the gold in the world in comparison with a slight degree of the holy love of God.

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is no more than a grain of sand: *All gold, in comparison of her, is as a little sand.* Wisd. vii. 9. And all the riches in the world, in comparison with a slight degree of the holy love of God, are no more than nothing: *I esteem riches nothing in comparison of her* Wisd. vii. 8.

But what are all the riches and gold in the world? Even all supernatural gifts are nothing without the holy love of God. Thus speaks the apostle St. Paul, 1 Cor. xiii. who arrived at so high a degree of the holy love of God, and therefore knew so well its value. *If,* said he, *I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. And if I should have prophecy, and should know all mysteries, and all knowledge, and if I should have all faith so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.*

The virtue of charity, or the holy love of God, is the queen of all virtues, which reigns and will reign for ever.

Faith, after death, will have its reward, because it will see what it has believed: but the virtue of faith will not continue in heaven.

Hope, after death, will have its reward, because it will realize its object, but the virtue of hope will not continue in heaven.

But charity, that is, the love of God, after death, will not only have its reward, but will reign for ever, because with the immense

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beatitude of heaven, it will continue to love for eternity that God whom it loved in this world.

Happy indeed then, blessed indeed is he who, by these two sure marks of labour and patience, of willingly doing and suffering all for God, can discover in himself the true and holy love of God!

Let us then all love, let us all and each one in the world, thus love God. In all our actions let us have God before our eyes, doing in all things his divine will, and seeking in all things to please him; and let us, not only with sufferance, but even with joy, bear all that may happen contrary to self-love and human sensibility.

It was for no other end but to love God, that God created us and sent us into this world.

To accomplish this end let us direct all our care and solicitude.

Let us make no account of anything but of divine love, and ask for nothing but love; let each one frequently say with St. Ignatius: Give me only thy grace and love and I shall be sufficiently rich: I ask for nothing more.

A short Act of the perfect Love of God, to be repeated frequently.

My God, I love you above all things, and all things: I love you with my whole soul, because you well deserve all my love.

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ASPIRATIONS OF LOVE FOR JESUS CHRIST.

My Jesus, thou alone art sufficient for me.

My love, never suffer me to be separated from thee.

When shall I be able to say to thee: My God, I can never more lose thee?

Lord, who am I, that thou shouldst so much desire to be loved by me?

Whom shall I love, if I love not thee, my Jesus?

Behold me, O Lord, dispose of me as thou pleasest. Give me thy love, I ask for nothing more.

Behold I die, make me all thine own.

Eternal Father, for the sake of Jesus Christ, have pity on me.

My God, I desire thee alone.

Oh that I might be entirely consumed, my Jesus, for the love of thee, who wast consumed for the love of me.

If I had died when I was in sin, I could have loved thee no more. Now that I can love thee, I desire to love thee as much as I am able.

To thee do I consecrate the remainder of my life.

I desire only thee, and I desire all that thou desirest.

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Grant that when I first behold thee, my Jesus, I may behold thee appeased.

Rather let me die than offend thee any more.

Thou wilt not forsake me, I will not forsake thee. I will always love thee, my God, both in this life and in the next.

I should be too ungrateful to thee, O my Jesus, if after so many graces I should love thee but little.

Thou hast given thyself wholly to me, I give myself wholly to thee.

Thou lovest those who love thee: I love thee, O do thou also love me. If I love thee but little, give me the love which thou requirest of me.

Thou hast exceedingly obliged me to love thee; grant that I may conquer all things to please thee.

Accept of a soul to love thee which has oftentimes offended thee.

Grant me to know the immensity of thy goodness, that I may indeed love thee.

O eternal God, I hope to love thee for all eternity.

Oh that I had always loved thee! Oh that I had died rather than have offended thee!

I give thee my will, my liberty, dispose of me as thou pleasest.

May my only pleasure be to please thee!

O my God, I rejoice that thou art infinitely happy.

Thou art omnipotent: make me holy.

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Thou didst seek me when I fled away from thee; thou didst love me when I despised thy love; do not abandon me now when I seek thee and love thee.

Now do I give myself wholly to thee.

Chastise me as thou pleasest, but deprive me not of the power of loving thee.

I thank thee for giving me time in which to love thee.

I love thee, my Jesus, I love thee; and hope to end my life saying: *I love thee, love thee.*

I desire to love thee without reserve, and to do all that I know will be pleasing to thee.

I love thy pleasure more than all the pleasures of the world.

I accept of all pains, because I love thee, O my God. Oh that I were able, my Jesus, to die for thee, who hast been pleased to die for me!

Oh! that I were able to make all men love thee as thou deservest!

O holy will of God, thou art my love.

O God of love, give me love.

O Mary, draw me entirely to God.

O holy Mother, may I always have recourse to you; by your holy intercession I hope to become a saint.

THE END.

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